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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians  
(*Section of the Library Association*)

EDITOR: D. HARRISON

Central Library, Manchester 2.

VOL. 52. NO. 8

AUGUST, 1959

## *The Nameless Ones*

The publications of individual libraries vary considerably in style and quality of writing, in presentation and in production. There is also a noticeable diversity of approach regarding the doings of the library staff. Some libraries—an apparently decreasing number—adopt the firmly impersonal approach ; there is a chief librarian responsible for all things, sometimes his name appears, sometimes not ; below him there is merely a machine with cogs. A growing number of libraries, however, believe in indicating the member of staff responsible for the publication in question and in listing in the annual report the names of departmental heads either in connection with their department, or on a separate page. Smaller libraries often list the whole of their staff. And Dagenham, a not so small library, says in its annual report for 1957-8, "The names of the members of staff are listed here because it is they who forward all the enterprise that is reported upon briefly in these pages." A few reports dole out words of praise to individuals ; a large number devote a section to the examination successes of members of the staff.

Behind these divergences lies a conflict in principle. Should we present librarianship to the world as an impersonal system or as a service rendered by individuals? As a profession which is not always fully recognised, librarianship should sell itself ; special librarianship to the members of its organisation or institution, public librarianship to the public. And if librarians believe in themselves as anything more than a paper-distributing agency, these people to whom they must sell themselves are individuals with individual needs and individual tastes. Only by direct contact in the library with the librarian as a person will the reader be able fully to appreciate the possibilities of his library. To further this approach a positive cult of the librarian as an individual must be built up ; this is possible without hindering the principle of the chief librarian as holding the ultimate responsibility for the service given. Nor are the public likely to believe in the librarian as a fit person to receive what we consider adequate remuneration if he is a nameless middleman who must needs refer everything to higher authority.

Many of us are wary of this personal approach ; not only the chief who is, probably from the best of motives, anxious to retain direct responsibility for everything, but also the librarian who meets the public if he (or she) is too diffident. Several library systems now favour the idea of having a nameplate on the enquiry desk or other service point, bearing the name of the librarian on duty. But many individuals when faced with the idea of having their names displayed have winced, passively resisted, or if given the opportunity, declined the suggestion. The old

idea of librarianship as a quiet job for the character who wants to hide himself (or herself) away is dying, but elements of it remain. We must cease to be "The Librarian" and become "Mr. Bloggs"—or even (supreme sacrifice!) "Joe Bloggs." From the annual report produced by "authority" to the chance remark at the counter we should go out of our way to let the public know the name of the man (or woman) who to them is **the** librarian.

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# Culture in Kiwiland

*An emigrant looks at library provision in New Zealand*

**by Derek Fielding**

*Deputy Librarian, Auckland University Library*

*The views expressed below have been formed after only nine months in New Zealand, during which personal contact has been made only with libraries in the Auckland area. The conclusions are based on impressions picked up during my daily work, and further experience may alter my ideas.*

What strikes a British librarian on arrival here is the small scale of everything. Libraries are small, the resources of the bookshops are small, the New Zealand Library Association (N.Z.L.A.) has only nine Fellows and seventy-five Associates: it is a relief to find that the professional outlook is broad and quite aware of modern developments. Provision of a wide range of material is also limited by the absence of a National Library—though there is a National Library Service—and the fact that books ordered from England take at least three months to arrive. It is frequently worth waiting those months for new books, as their prices in local bookshops may be as much as 25 per cent higher.

Rather stimulating, for this British librarian at least, is the amount of American practice in New Zealand libraries. The distance to the U.S.A. is much shorter than the distance "Home"—as Kiwis call Britain—and contact with America is helped by the fact that Auckland is a port of call for liners running from America to Australia, or to Europe via the Pacific route. This influence is attested by the prevalence of the Newark and Detroit charging methods, the use of dictionary catalogues, and a rather respectful reliance on the Library of Congress Catalogue which seems to ignore the fact that it is a co-operative catalogue, with the failures and inconsistencies that co-operation naturally implies in such a subjective mystery as cataloguing. This atmosphere makes one less parochial, more ready to think of American sources for information or service, and more interested in regular reading of American library periodicals.

**Public Libraries.** Local Government, particularly in Auckland, is even more chaotic than it is in England. The largest library is probably Auckland City, whose area covers only some 200,000 of the metropolitan area's half-million people. The remainder are catered for either by small local authorities—with all the limitation of resources and administration which that entails—or not at all. The richest and most populous suburban authorities round Auckland are not ashamed to lack public library services entirely. This pattern is repeated elsewhere; while 90 per cent of boroughs under 15,000 population provide libraries, only 10 per cent of counties do so. It must be added that scattered population and numerous very small settlements make provision especially difficult.

This picture is redeemed by two factors. The first is the high standard and achievement of those which do exist; the second is the County Library Service.

The latter is part of the National Library Service, which contains also the School Library Service, the National Library Centre and the Library School. These activities are supported by national funds. The County Library Service has a stock of some 650,000 fiction and non-

fiction which it lends to boroughs, towns and counties within certain population limits, on condition that they give free service of an approved standard. There are 107 such authorities receiving loans at present, and the County Library Service also makes loans at a small charge to some 800 independent subscription public libraries, and free to about 1,000 groups such as labour camps, hospitals, prisons and isolated families.

The County Library Service is the most encouraging feature of the public library scene. The scarcity of large cities, and thus of library resources in depth, make it essential to co-ordinate what facilities there are. This can only be done by co-operation and State encouragement, and the N.Z.L.A. has issued a report, "Co-operation, a new phase," which recommends that the government should encourage federations of local authorities for library purposes by subsidising them at a rate of 4s. per head. The existence of State aid in the form of the County Library Service is an excellent precedent for such a policy.

*School Libraries.* A major difference between local authorities here and in Britain is that they do not finance education. This is provided from State funds and administered by local Education Boards. Similar "ad hoc" authorities exist for many purposes such as drainage and transport which are catered for by local authorities in Britain. It is a natural corollary to the education system that the School Library Service should be organised on a national basis. The Service has a stock of over a million books and it provides mainly recreational reading to Primary Schools (children up to thirteen years) and to small public libraries. The N.Z.L.A. report mentioned above suggests that if the country was covered by Federations for library purposes, these could take over the service to schools.

*University Libraries.* There are four Universities—formerly constituent colleges of the University of New Zealand—and two agricultural colleges. The libraries were originally planned as college libraries. The one in Auckland intended for 1,500 students, now has to serve 3,500, and it is anticipated that in a few years' time there will be 10,000. This means that accommodation is totally inadequate both for readers and stock, and new buildings are required. In addition no University library contains more than 130,000 volumes, which is far too small for research purposes.

Plans have been made to improve both buildings and book provision. In spite of the present economic difficulties money will probably be forthcoming for these purposes. There is no doubt that the librarians themselves see what needs to be done. However, one remains slightly dubious that even an apparently wealthy country like this can afford so many universities, not to mention a fifth which is being contemplated.

*Special Libraries.* Here I can give only very general opinions at present. There are some excellent institutional libraries, and those of government departments appear to be flourishing. Industrial and commercial firms are on a very small scale, and as a result their libraries are not extensive.

*The National Scene.* The only copyright library is that of the General Assembly in Wellington. This is primarily a parliamentary library, although research facilities are provided for approved persons. A Select Committee of the House of Representatives recently recommended that a National Library should be set up embracing the National Library Service, the General Assembly Library and the Alexander Turnbull Library which specialises particularly in Pacific material.

Librarians have long been aware that New Zealand's library problems can only be solved properly on a national scale. Much of the progress so far achieved is due to the N.Z.L.A. The Association organises library education for non-graduates (there is a post-graduate library School). This consists of a part-time two-year course of tutorials, written work and examination, and a five-week period at the Library School. Successful candidates are awarded the Certificate of the N.Z.L.A. The course is mainly intended for public librarians. The N.Z.L.A. also performs such useful functions as providing brief reviews of current fiction and recommending their suitability for free or rental collections, which would be considered beneath the dignity of Chaucer House. The Association was influential in having a National Library considered, and many of the Committee's recommendations are inspired by its proposals.

The National Library Centre was also set up at the suggestion of N.Z.L.A. At the Centre is maintained the National Union Catalogue, which helps librarians to make the best use of such materials as are available in the country. The Centre also produces printed catalogue cards for books published in New Zealand, and such outstanding bibliographical aids as a Union List of Periodicals, with frequent supplements, and a Union List of Theses of New Zealand Universities. Unfortunately, the National Library Centre has to function from incredibly bad quarters, and the government has been reluctant to spend public funds on new premises.

One-year courses for graduates are provided by the Library School, which awards its diploma—Dip N.Z.L.A.—to successful students. My impression is that the professional standard is roughly equivalent to the British Registration examination, but because its trainees are always graduates, they may have a broader background than British non-graduate Associates. Librarians with diplomas are the elite of the profession. About 16 to 20 qualify each year, and university libraries, for instance, are unlikely to employ people having only the Certificate of N.Z.L.A. in professional positions.

Associateship of the N.Z.L.A. is not obtained by examination. It is conferred on applicants whose qualifications and experience are considered suitable. Minimum requirements are one year's professional training in New Zealand, a qualification, and three years' experience. As far as Fellowship is concerned, the demands are so exacting—technically the same as for Associates, except with five years' experience—that there are hardly enough Fellows to form a selection committee. It is interesting to note that the Council has power to hold an enquiry into a member's conduct and strike him off the register.

At present there is no national scale of salaries for public libraries although the N.Z.L.A. is busy redrafting one which it recommends to employing authorities. The large number of small libraries and a shortage of qualified people militate against recognition of and demands for professional knowledge. As a result there are few openings for qualified librarians, particularly men, in public libraries, and the idea that a full-time library should be run by a trained person is not generally accepted. For example, the largest public library known to me employs only two men, the Librarian and his Deputy. I cannot imagine where their successors will come from.

In the universities things are slightly better, and Heads of Departments are paid a salary adequate (but only just) to the needs of a married

man. The demand for qualified people is greater, and cannot at the moment be filled. In addition there are reasonable prospects that the salary scales will be improved.

For anyone contemplating emigration the outlook is mixed. A single person, qualified, would probably not have difficulty in finding a reasonable position, and the climate, country and way of life together with the kindness of New Zealanders, form an incalculable concealed increment. Married men, especially those with children, should not take a leap in the dark, but come to an appointment. Once established, they will find that this is the best country in the world for children to grow up in.

Here, then, is one British librarian's view of New Zealand. There is plenty to be done, and also an active professional group with the vision and drive to do it.

## **Talking Points**

Readers of "Liaison" will have noted the good news that Nalgo have agreed upon A.P.T. II as the basis for future negotiations for posts requiring their holders to be chartered librarians. The success of the two motions on librarians' salaries at the Nalgo Conference, is also heartening, particularly the Nottingham and Solihull motion which followed closely the recently expressed views of the A.A.L. The A.A.L. can be justly proud of its lead in this matter, and we were fortunate to have our secretary, John Jones as one of the L.A. representatives at the recent meeting of the L.A. with Nalgo. We must also pay tribute to the many non-librarian members of Nalgo, who are giving us their support, and remember that the Nottingham/Solihull motion was most ably proposed by a non-librarian.

1,400 leaflets were distributed at the Nalgo Conference by the Yorkshire Division of the A.A.L., calling on delegates to vote for the Nottingham/Solihull motion. Divisional Secretary, W. S. H. Ashmore, who, together with J. D. Lee and M. Hughes of Leeds Library School, gave out the leaflets, reports that they were well received and that their picketing was entirely peaceful !

Another A.A.L. idea, or at least an idea of which the A.A.L. has been perhaps the strongest supporter, is to be put into practice. We are to have a part-time public relations officer attached to Chaucer House. The only adverse reaction from members of the A.A.L. is from those who wanted him full-time ! On the basis of Mr. Barry's view of the matter, printed in the June *Liaison*, a part-time officer will probably fill the bill ; experience will no doubt prove or disprove this contention.

Theoretical wrangles over the value of our examinations are a commonplace. More disturbing is the practical attitude taken by Dr. Urquhart, senior officer of the D.S.I.R. Lending Library Unit, who opposes the idea of chartered librarians in scientific libraries. A recent article by D. J. Foskett in the *Librarian and Bookworld* emphasises and deplores this unhappy lack of co-ordination between the Library Association and scientific libraries. Wherever the blame lies, all who think that the future of librarianship rests in part on its becoming a unified profession must be disturbed by Dr. Urquhart's attitude. Is he justified in assuming that our qualifications are unnecessary, even undesirable, for the practising of librarianship in a scientific library?

## ***The Thrice-Protected Book***

*by David S. Thornton, Leeds School of Librarianship*

**"Plastic jackets for books in their lending library will cost Camberwell £1,400 a year."** *Liaison*. January, 1959.

Most librarians will have heard the argument that the preservation of the book-jacket on the book after purchase is ridiculous as it serves only to protect that which is in itself a protective covering. Nevertheless, we are surrounded by plastic manufacturers and library suppliers relating the glories of plastic covers for book-jackets, apparently with success.

The book trade quickly realised the advantage of using the dust-cover as a sales aid, and also as an excuse for cheap, dull cases. Having some experience in the trade I, too, am fully aware of the commercial benefits of the decorated jacket, both for its original purpose as a dust and finger-mark protector and as an aid to formal display. I am not, however, so sure that its retention on the book in the library is of the same value.

The purchasing of plastic covers is obviously costly. Is Camberwell's book-stock really so good that £1,400 could not be spent on useful books? The fitting of such covers is tiresome and wasteful of time; if sleeves are used then either stocks of various sizes must be kept or sleeves must be "adapted"; if the sheet form is used it has to be cut to size; both types must be well secured. Other methods used to protect jackets include reinforcing with brown gummed strip—a pastime of more value to an infant school than to a library. If books are bought ready-covered staff-time is saved, but the cost is increased.

This labour and expense would be justified if there was any definite value in retaining jackets on books—but is there? I can think of five possible advantages:—

- (1) the books prove more attractive to borrowers.
- (2) the shelves are made more attractive.
- (3) the "binding" is protected from dirt and wear.
- (4) the title is more easily read on the jacket.
- (5) the "blurb" is of value, helping the reader in his selection.

(1) is admissible—but should we encourage readers, already only too willing, to regard the new books as the best books by indicating new books so that they stand out like an oasis in the desert; should we, by preserving the jacket on the book for as long as possible, use underhand methods to persuade the innocent reader that last year's novel is really 'fresh from the press'? And for how long does even a plastic cover retain its freshness and thus its attractiveness?

(2)—(4) can be dealt with together. Modern publishers' cases are, for the most part, badly constructed with poor materials, and of poor design and appearance. Rather than encourage publishers to spend even more on the design of jackets surely we should demand that they use washable cloths and plastics, in brighter colours, and with good designs and legible lettering—demand to the extent of refusing to buy sub-standard books. Librarians could, and should, influence the physical production of books far more. That my demands are possible is shown by the newer designs of the commercial library binderies and one or two publishers.

(5) The value of the "blurb" is doubtful, but here again the librarian should influence the publisher—get him to produce an honest summary

of the book (to print on the jacket if he wishes) and to print it on the half-title page so that there would be an abstract of the book even when re-bound.

The reasons for using plastic covers are valid in so far as they attempt to remedy existing faults, but I contend that the remedies lie in other directions.

Having argued that the jacket should not be retained *on the book*, I must now argue that it should be *retained*. Libraries, usually so bereft of display material, cannot afford to let book-jackets, many of which are outstanding examples of commercial art, go to waste.

It is common practice for current book-jackets to be fastened to display boards (before being returned to the books) as a guide to new accessions; this is useful as it adds to the colour in the library, and is more likely to attract the reader than a list of authors and titles (a jacket is obviously related to a book but not so a catalogue entry). This practice could be extended and made more valuable if jackets were inserted into binders containing plastic pockets, an annotation could be inserted also; this would give life to the annotation and additional value to the jacket. Both these methods have the advantage of showing a wide selection of new additions in a way impossible if the jackets were left on the books when first issued. The second method would help to combat the indiscriminate choosing of new books merely because of their newness.

After having been on such a current display, all jackets of merit should be filed by class number and could then be used as background material for subject displays. This would help to make bright displays easily and a good selection of jackets on a subject would help to bring the display to life at that period when the more popular titles (those which would be on issue display or no display) are on loan and only the "Time for Gardening" poster and the lesser known books remain. The jackets on display may well draw the attention of the reader to a book he would otherwise have overlooked; also he could survey the jackets of books on loan, an act which might be of more effect than merely reading a book-list (which should still be produced for marking and reference).

Whilst not believing that we should encourage readers to select books from the jacket only, I do believe it is important to use such visual aids as an additional way of drawing attention to the library's stock . . . visual aids having the effect of stimulating initial interest. The jacket is an obvious visual aid, having a direct relationship to the book; it is of far more value in the library than in the home, where the contents are of premier importance.

I recently observed a man walking in the rain with an umbrella aloft, over which article he had carefully placed a plastic cover . . . .

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## **Correspondence**

### **Special Library Jobs**

#### **Vice-Versa**

I should like to express my sympathy with the point of view put forward by Mr. Walker in your June issue, for I am a *special* librarian who wants to get into *public* librarianship. Like Mr. Walker, I, too, have been at interviews granted with full knowledge of my library background, and I have been greeted with the remark, "Of course, you've no public library experience, have you?" Personal pique aside, this surely shows that there is something seriously wrong with the attitude shown to Library Association qualifications by interviewing committees and officers. Mr. Walker asks: "Is a Chartered Librarian not capable of picking up sufficient technical knowledge to do a job of work in a special library?" I should have thought he was, and I should also have thought that anyone who had proved himself (or herself) by becoming a Chartered Librarian would be capable of working efficiently in *any* kind of library. That, I have assumed, up to now, to be one of the advantages of acquiring Library Association qualifications, but interviewing committees and officers do not seem to see it that way. It is an alarming thought that these people, experienced in interviewing candidates and, in some cases, Chief and Deputy Librarians possessing the same qualifications themselves, should disregard them and prefer to judge candidates on practical working experience. The end-result of this attitude is the even more alarming realisation that one's choice of library, made in one's teens, may be likely to prejudice and restrict the rest of one's professional life.

MIRIAM MILLER, *Reid Music Library, Edinburgh.*

#### **Keep Trying, Mr. Walker**

Your correspondent may be interested in the response we have had to two recent advertisements of jobs vacant. In late 1957 we advertised for two cataloguers and received four replies. Last month we advertised a further two posts; so far we have had six replies, but only two of these are from chartered librarians.

A good many special librarians as well as ourselves would be delighted to consider public librarians for vacancies if they would take the trouble to apply. Although we ask for experience of our type of work, we do so more in hope than in expectation. If your correspondent has the potential ability to use his professional knowledge in a special library he should try again. Our recent experience tends to show that young public librarians prefer to play safe rather than take a look at new fields.

J. BINNS, *Chief Librarian, Whetstone/Rugby Library, English Electric.*

#### **What's so special about a Special Library?**

On conning the correspondence in the June issue of the *Assistant Librarian*, I was somewhat intrigued by the longing of A. Walker to get away from "the stultifying atmosphere of the public library service." It seems to be the earnest endeavour of a great many colleagues to transfer to special library services and one wonders what are the real

reasons for this desire. Could it be simply financial, for there is a widespread belief that fortunes are waiting round the corner in the commercial world; or could it be the desire to creep into a nice, quiet, secluded little niche—the hermit instinct coming out? For many years I was privileged to work under a chief who saw in public librarianship a great deal more than the mere issuing of books, and one of his comments on our profession concerned the fact that there were many of our colleagues whose greatest aim was to secure a back-room administrative job where it was possible to shut one's door away from the public contact and control one's little empire by edicts and techniques that other unfortunates would have to administer in the face of public irritation and criticism. Possibly those who wish to enter the special library world are assistants who have suffered by being buffers between such administrators and their public, and are catching the same disease.

It has always been one of my own tenets that the most interesting aspect of our world is the people who live in it—and over the years I have not seen any reason to change this viewpoint. I like people, and although I am perfectly well aware of the irritating folk that can be a constant thorn in the flesh, there are many others who more than compensate for the bents and cranks. I am in one of the smaller public libraries, and so have ample opportunity to still know my public—but should it ever have come my way to be a more elevated cog in a larger system, I should certainly have tried my utmost to make opportunities of meeting the borrowers in the library. Possibly a requirement that ought to receive consideration alongside academic qualification is a liking for people in those librarians who do undertake the administration of public libraries.

STANLEY C. DEDMAN, *Borough Librarian, Godalming.*

### *The Call of the Wild*

*Some comments on Mr. James's letter "Go North-West, Young Man" (May "Assistant"), which called for more newly-qualified librarians to help with library services in underdeveloped areas.*

**K. Carter, Deputy County Librarian, Herefordshire, writes :**

In his letter attempting to trace motives deterring young qualified librarians from moving to more remote areas, Mr. James is inclined to condemn them for refusing to venture away from city lights and urban "civilisation." He only verges on part of the truth.

Surely the crux lies in the weakness of the temptation to move? A.P.T. I is no more than a carrot seed when a man has to bear the cost of removal and family separation, as happens in most cases. Housing is the great problem. Not many young librarians can save enough on H.G.D. to provide the deposit for a house, and it is only municipal and urban district authorities which can offer council houses. County Councils which obviously control library services in Mr. James' remoter areas are not housing authorities and can usually offer nothing—to librarians.

Comparison with engineers, clergymen, teachers is false reasoning. County Councils are permitted to provide school houses, police houses and accommodation for divisional engineers and surveyors. For parsons the Church provides vicarages. Librarians are not so essential.

Geologists, I know nothing about except that in common with engineers and teachers, they are much better paid than A.P.T. I.

**Kathleen J. Eggleston, Colleges of Art and Technology, Leicester, comments :**

No-one can ignore future prospects entirely, and newly-qualified librarians often consider it professional death to move to some of the smaller authorities who are struggling to provide a reasonable service. It is difficult to move back later to a larger library from a remote County famed, more for the poorness of its service, than its potential aims.

Once a new mobile route is established, most of the work does settle down to a humdrum pace, with much routine, a preponderance of light fiction and some light non-fiction issues, enlivened by occasional quarrels with one's main companion, the mobile driver. Requests for specialised books all have to be dealt with later, and any reference questions will be jealously guarded by the mobile librarian, since such work is often very rare. Is this what the newly-qualified enthusiastic librarian, brimming with titles of reference books, really wants in his library life?

Lack of contact with colleagues and ideas may not deter the clergy from settling in the country, but it will deter librarians. The F.L.A. exam. also looms ahead for many and this will not be passed on experience gained through mobile work alone.

I personally am thankful to know that no longer am I liable to be frozen in the winter on the mobile, but am firmly established in a building, in constant contact with other librarians, and surrounded by a good stock of encyclopaedias and reference books.

**P. D. Gratton, Manchester School of Librarianship, writes :**

I believe that the tendency is not, as Mr. James suggests, against movement into rural areas, but is rather against movement to inadequate systems, and it is coincidence that such systems are usually found in remote areas.

Two basic considerations which influence an Associate moving to his first professional post are, firstly, the long and short term economics, and secondly, the professional potentialities. It may seem a little mundane, but they usually come in that order.

Short term financial considerations are relatively straightforward—A.P.T. 1 is usually all that need be said here; long term considerations are rather different.

Accepting that one goes to such an A.P.T. 1 post with A.L.A. at the age of, say, 23, agreeing to stay for some two years, then at the age of 25 one is expecting to be on the ladder and climbing. It must be allowed that there is little chance of internal promotion inside a small system, and that, as at present constituted, the profession only offers "high" salaries to librarians in senior positions in large authorities. Or to Deputies and Chiefs in smaller authorities. From this it is clear that the next step on the ladder must be to one of these posts. Experience in smaller authorities is generally held to fit one for only the more minor professional positions in the large systems, and recruitment of Chief Librarians for smaller authorities tends now to be from the senior posts in larger systems. Economically this is where we came in.

We must accept, I think, that the severe financial limits placed on the smaller public library must necessarily restrict the provisions made, and the most direct instance is that pinpointed in the Roberts Report, and noted year after year in the official L.A. statistics—the sheer lack of any reasonable book fund. Any library service is tied to its finances both for staff and materials, and we must face the fact that a book fund even

of £3,595 is inadequate to provide a bookstock which would be a foundation for practising professional librarianship.

Also, I would suggest, stemming from this same basic inadequacy, there is the problem of keeping in touch—the number of professional periodicals taken must be severely limited, as must be the time available for attendance at meetings.

I would suggest that it is very difficult for an assistant trained in a small or remote library to envisage the breadth of scope of the services of a large system, with its highly developed technical service, its specialist music service, its wealth of bibliographical material, and the rest, and equally, the assistant trained in the large system realises only too well the frustrations encountered when moving to a post in a small system.

Training must be mentioned, for the shortcomings which show up here may well be critical. In-service training may prove difficult not only because of the inevitable lack of material, but also the lack of adequate qualified staff capable of executing a reasonable programme. The problem of attendance at classes (bearing in mind that we are considering classes at Finals level) is acute, qualified professional staff in a library of this nature are pretty well indispensable, even for short periods. Facilities for study are likely to be inadequate, both directly related to stock, and also to the absence of qualified specialist staff capable of sharing their specialist knowledge and experience, again bearing in mind that the assistant losing here is the assistant reaching out for his or her final qualification, with considerable experience, bibliographical knowledge, and so many of the other aspects of professional librarianship which are most difficult to gain in any small or remote library.

## *Exploiting the Fiction Stock*

### *Lettering the Spine*

Your correspondent, Mr. Alan Morley, might be interested in a few remarks regarding our experience at Luton with fiction classification.

In common, I imagine, with the majority of libraries which classify fiction, we keep the books in alphabetical author order, marking the spine with a letter to denote the subject content. Books falling outside the following categories are not marked in any way: Adventure (A), Mystery (M), Western (W), Romance (R), Family Stories (F), Historical Novels (H), Science Fiction (Sf), Humorous Novels (Hu), Short Stories (Ss).

There is obviously plenty of room for cross-classification, but this would only be serious if it resulted in the splitting up of an author's works. Since this danger is avoided by shelving in author order, the effect is negligible. Many of Dennis Wheatley's novels, for example, would qualify under several of the above headings, but the reader who likes Wheatley's style does the sensible thing and ignores the letters on the spine.

Criticism from the public has been, without exception, favourable. The system is helpful to the staff in various ways. It assists in finding books quickly for readers, in selecting balanced fiction stocks for service points and inevitably, since all books, whether finally marked or not, must be examined, improves the book knowledge of those members of staff engaged in classification.

J. ALAN HOWE, Deputy Borough Librarian, Luton.

*Librarians from Colwyn Bay and Paddington report similar methods.—ED.*

## *Classification and Display*

The appalling popularity of fiction dumps in some libraries is proof of the poverty of our thinking in supposing that alphabetical order means very much to the reader. We would be shocked if we were told to apply the same principle to non-fiction. I expect and hope that it is lack of time which prevents most librarians from breaking down the alphabetical lump, leavening it with subject displays (fiction and non-fiction together), and separating westerns, adventure stories, mysteries, historical novels, etc. I have experimented with this in three branches of varying types and it was appreciated ; immediately at one where the reading was of a more intelligent nature, and subsequently at the other two when the initial resistance to change had been overcome.

I prefer this method to displaying lists of authors specialising in a particular genre and it is certainly quicker and more satisfactory than handing out individual lists of authors to readers.

EDNA M. WOOD, *Manchester Public Libraries.*

## *The Reader's point of view*

As one who has had experience " both sides of the counter," may I pass the following comments on the various fiction classification schemes that I have encountered :

My first experience as a member of the public using a library was of the straightforward alphabetical sequence of novels, with no other indication of subject matter. This, at first, was fine. From my previous close contact with books, I knew both what I wanted to read and where to find it, but within six months of my resignation from active librarianship I found I was getting surprisingly lost amongst the welter of new books and authors that continually pour from the presses. So I began to get a keener insight into the position facing most people viewing the thickly stocked shelves. If I, after eight years in the library world (three of which were spent in a readers' adviser capacity) could so quickly lose my touch, then what of the average member of the reading public?

On the other hand, where I now live the library prefers the method of separate subject sections and our reading matter is conveniently parcelled out for us. This was a welcome change—and it certainly suits those readers who intend to stick to one type of literature now and for evermore ; but here again, experience has brought some snags.

Authors who treat of various themes, naturally have their works separated, and to read up any one becomes correspondingly difficult—the more so as individual titles are not always where one would expect to find them.

Furthermore, from being a reader of catholic tastes, I now find my reading being circumscribed by a set of shelves, and I find a definite effort is required to turn from browsing amongst one section and tackle another. There is no invitation or inclination to explore and widen one's literary interests, and whilst good (and I emphasize, good) displays and headings could overcome this, many librarians have neither the time, the money, nor the trained staff to make such work effective. On the other hand, without such an effort a legitimate and, I believe, very important part of librarianship is being ignored—to the detriment of our readers.

So that, finally, I return to the method in which I was trained ; to the use of symbols in conjunction with alphabetical sequence. Providing there is a large and clear notice explaining these symbols, it seems to me

now that both "one track" readers and those of many interests *plus* the library staff (trained or not) can find their way around by this method with the minimum of fuss and bother.

Agreed that it will not induce "one trackers" to explore—but then, what will?—it does not narrow the field for others in any way, and—practical thought!—from a librarian's point of view it is surely the easiest and quickest method as far as tidying is concerned.

Librarians will no doubt continue to favour their own favourite system, and defend it to the death, but possibly these comments from one who has been both sides of the counter may be of value when considering the needs (*not* wants) of our borrowers.

EILEEN I. GOOCH.

### **Mr. Phillips's point of view**

How easily does attempted satire misfire! At the Folkestone Conference, as the Editor correctly reported (*Assistant*, June 1959), I attempted to stress the hypocrisy of the present practice in the display of fiction and expressed my amusement that so many librarians supply masses of ephemeral fiction and then insist upon making it difficult to find.

I hasten to assure Mr. Morley that I would not consciously advocate a special grouping of light fiction—I would, in practice, merely attempt not to supply it!

I was convinced many years ago by my experience at Dagenham, that readers do not automatically nor continually demand "tripe" when something better is provided in clean and attractive editions and when a member of the staff is readily available to assist in the choice of reading.

W. HOWARD PHILLIPS, *Deputy City Librarian, Sheffield.*

### **Children's Reading**

W. B. Shaw, writing in your May issue on children's reading, says "Public librarians seem to have realised that the study of what books do to people is something they are not qualified to investigate . . ."

Surely this remark is a little wild. Children's Librarians, at least, if they are worthy of the title, have ever in mind the social and educational value of the books they handle. Most of us are continually having to answer the question: "Is this book suitable for children?" They are obliged to find an answer, not only to satisfy themselves, but also to protect themselves against the irate parent who might ask indignantly, "Why have you exposed my child to this sort of thing?"

Each of us, in uncomfortable isolation, has to set some standard and stick to it. We all, I think, exclude the condonation and glorification of vice, or what society acknowledges as vice. Are we, however, justified in banning what society in general permits? War has been glorified from the beginning of literature. Until society forbids fathers to reminisce nostalgically about their wartime experiences, until films, broadcasting and school textbooks outlaw war as a subject for romance, how can librarians refuse to supply young people with the books they so avidly demand?

RONALD P. A. EDWARDS, *Shoreditch Public Libraries.*

### **Ranganathan's "Elements of library classification."**

We regret that owing to the printing dispute, Ranganathan's *Elements* could not be published on the date announced. As soon as copies are received they will be despatched to those who have already ordered them.

J. S. DAVEY.

### **Other Divisions, please note**

As a result of co-operation between the Divisional Committee and a group of libraries in the East Midlands Division, students have recently completed a series of study visits to representative libraries.

It was felt that the normal opportunities to see other libraries, through Branch and Divisional meetings, were not sufficient to enable students to gain a clear picture of each, and the study visits were planned as an experiment to try and improve the position. The libraries visited were Boots' Medical and Scientific Library, Leicester Institute of Education Library, Nottinghamshire County Library, Nottingham City Library and Nottingham University Library, and all gave unstinted help and encouragement.

The visits were on a day or half-day basis (depending on the size of library) at monthly intervals to give students the maximum opportunity to see all the libraries if they wished. The response has been sufficiently promising for the committee to consider the scheme as a regular feature of their activities.

D. P. MORTLOCK.

### **A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES.**

#### **REVISION COURSES, SEPTEMBER—DECEMBER, 1959.**

A limited number of *Registration* and *Final* courses will be available for the session September—December. These short period courses are reserved exclusively for those students who have already sat the examination in the subjects required.

The closing date for application is 25th August; it must be emphasised that after this date no application will be considered. *Overseas students are ineligible.*

#### **FULL LENGTH COURSES.**

Application for *F.P.E. Registration*, and *Final* courses beginning Autumn, 1959, must be completed and returned by 30th September. Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the current edition of the *Student's Handbook*.

#### **FORMS, FEES AND ENQUIRIES.**

Application for forms must be accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes and should be sent to the A.A.L., Hon. Education and Sales Officer, Mr. J. S. Davey, F.L.A., 49, Halstead Gardens, Winchmore Hill, London, N.21. The fee for each course, both revision and full length, is £3 10s. 0d. Students outside Europe taking full length courses are charged 10s. extra for each course.

### **New Visual Aids**

#### **Reading to Learn—16 mm. film. 400 ft. Produced by Essex Education Committee.**

A new film about Libraries is always an interesting event. The film under review was made by Essex Schools in co-operation with the County Library of Essex. It is directed primarily to children and having been made with them in mind quite correctly moves more slowly than would a film made for adult consumption.

The film opens with a mischievous looking little lad trying his eager hand at repairing a clock that has not worked for a long time. While the boy is at work on this, his father comes into the room and quite ably assists in increasing the state of chaos that was slowly but surely developing. At this point the boy decides that the project must be organised on rather a better basis and goes off to the Library for a suitable book. Arrived there he is met with customary bibliothecal courtesy which expresses itself in a short survey of Public (County) Library facilities. This results in the boy getting the book

he needs after the necessary delay normally consequent on inter-library lending practice. Equipped with this manual the chaos at the boy's home gives way to ordered repair work and the job is done. It is not possible to miss the obvious moral that the Public (County) Library is there to help.

The photography is good and the cutting slows down the tempo to make a deeper impression on children's minds. The sound track, which is optional, is well recorded, but the commentator could with advantage be rather more fluent. There is no music in the track.

Though the film is made with a rural library bias, this in no way detracts from its usefulness in schools anywhere. It can be hired for a small charge from E.F.V.A., The Foundation Film Library, Brooklands House, Weybridge, Surrey.

WALTER F. BROOME.

**North Western School of Librarianship. Bibliographies of bibliographies. [Filmstrip] by L. M. Payne and M. J. Saich, photographed and edited by W. F. Broome.**

This filmstrip, the second in the series produced by the North Western Polytechnic School of Librarianship, should help to overcome one of the major obstacles to the efficient teaching of Assistance to Readers, that is, the difficulty of providing access to a sufficient number of copies of advanced and specialised works to ensure familiarity with their purpose, layout and use. Obviously the use of the physical volume itself is the most satisfactory method of acquiring such familiarity, but this is an unobtainable ideal for most students, and it is a commonplace that many sit this part of the examination without ever having seen any but a handful of the necessary books.

*Bibliographies of bibliographies*, which originated in a group project by a class of part-time students, consists of 38 frames in addition to the usual credit titles, and is supplied together with a four-page script intended apparently for use by the student rather than the tutor. The method employed in presenting the material has been to select, from *Besterman*, one bibliography of a particular subject field, which is then traced through other bibliographies of bibliographies, showing in the process such things as page arrangements, methods of entry, title-pages, indexes and the physical appearance of the volume. The tracing is clearly and lucidly done, but is interrupted by a series of frames showing other types of bibliography also to be found in *Besterman*, which tends to impair the sequence of presentation.

The strip is noteworthy for thoroughly competent technical production, and should be a very useful addition to the resources currently available for teaching this section of the syllabus.

G. LANGLEY.

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